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Appln. No. 10/577,793
Amendment dated September 7, 2007
Reply to Office Action of June 21, 2007

Amendments to the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1 and 5 and amend claims 2, 4, 6 and 10 as follows. The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Cancelled).

Claim 2 (Currently Amended). ~~[[The]]~~ A sliding closing element according to Claim 1, for an intermediate distributor or similar metallurgical container, comprising:

a mobile sliding plate which can be driven by means of a
5 drive comprising a driving rod and a push rod connected thereto,
wherein the connection between the driving rod and the push rod
is formed by a coupling arranged between opposite ends of the
driving rod and push rod with two coupling parts that engage each
other without play, wherein

10 the coupling comprises a coupling head and a coupling claw
that is received into the same by means of form and force
closure, with a wedge shoe spring tensioned transversely in

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relation to a driving direction of the driving rod and supported against the wedge shoe pressing against the coupling head.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented). The sliding closing element according to Claim 2, wherein the coupling head comprises a component with a T-shaped cross-section that includes a facing side engaging bridge and an adjacent middle bridge.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended). A sliding closing element comprising a coupling claw including a component with a U-shaped cross-section comprising a facing wall, a rear wall, two side walls and a floor plate, whereby the facing wall includes a
5 central receiving slot for a middle bridge of a coupling head, and the rear wall and the floor plate are equipped with support surfaces for a wedge shoe, wherein

the wedge shoe is tensioned by at least one spring arranged along a longitudinal axis of the driving rod.

Claim 5 (Cancelled).

Claim 6 (Currently Amended). The sliding closing element according to Claim [[5]] 4, wherein the wedge shoe is connected

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with a set screw inserted through the centre of the floor plate
of the coupling claw, which does not contact the floor plate
5 during operation, so that the height of the wedge shoe can be
adjusted transversely in relation to the driving direction.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented). The sliding closing element
according to Claim 6, wherein the wedge shoe is maintainable in
position by the set screw during coupling until the specific
coupling is complete, whereas the set screw can be screwed in
5 further during de-coupling, whereby the wedge shoe, and with it
the coupling, can be disconnected.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented). The sliding closing element
according to Claim 7, wherein the abutting surfaces of the
coupling head and the coupling claw include tapered edges [(30,
31)].

Claim 9 (Previously Presented). The sliding closing element
according to Claim 8, wherein the coupling head includes an
integrated part of the push rod.

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Claim 10 (Currently Amended). A coupling for a sliding closing element according to Claim ~~[[1]]~~ 2, wherein the coupling is installable into the sliding closing element as a construction assembly including the coupling claw and the coupling head with
5 the integrated push rod.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented). A coupling for a sliding closing element according to Claim 4, wherein the coupling is installable into the sliding closing element as a construction assembly including the coupling claw and the coupling head with
5 the integrated push rod.